# ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

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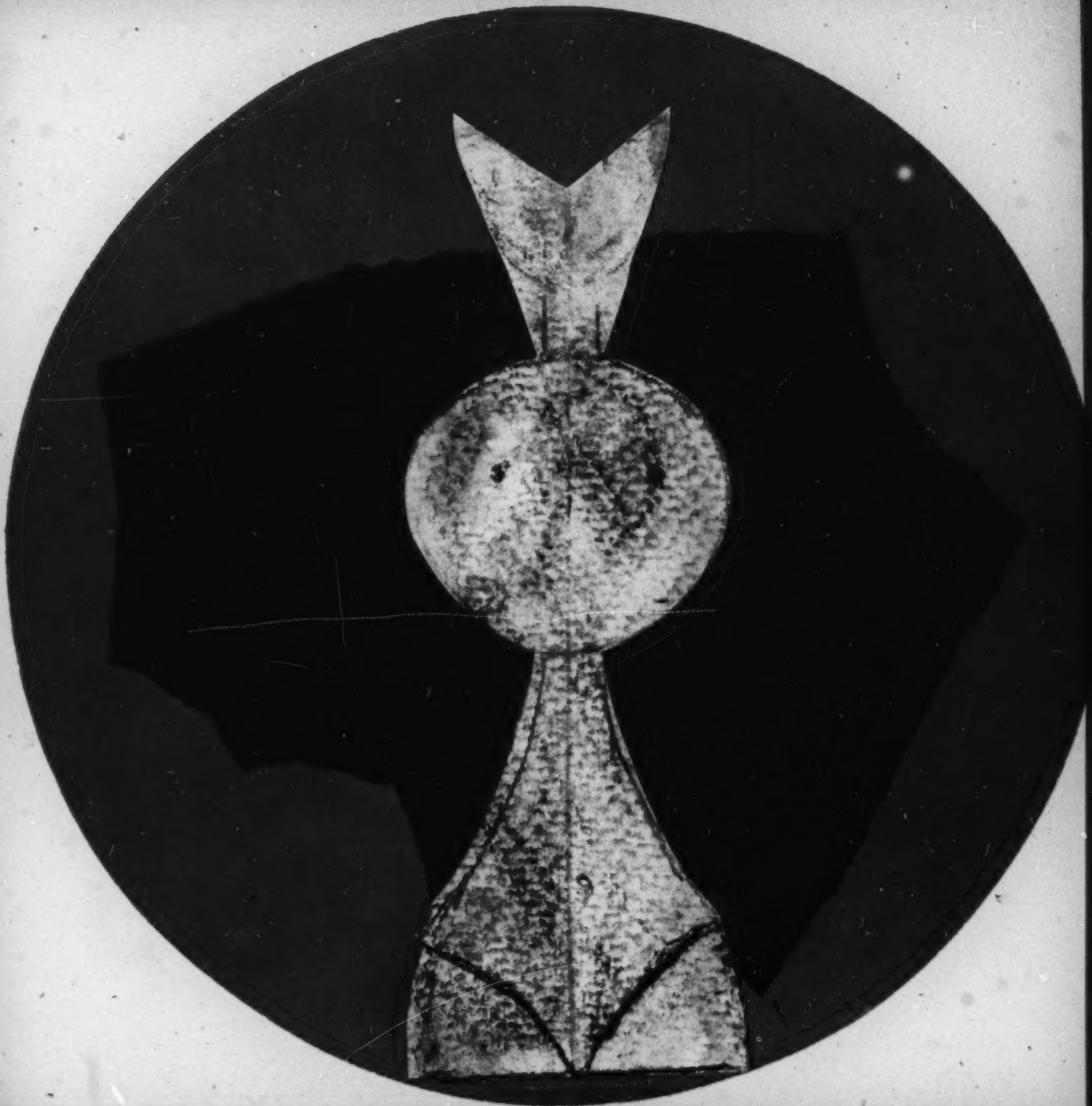

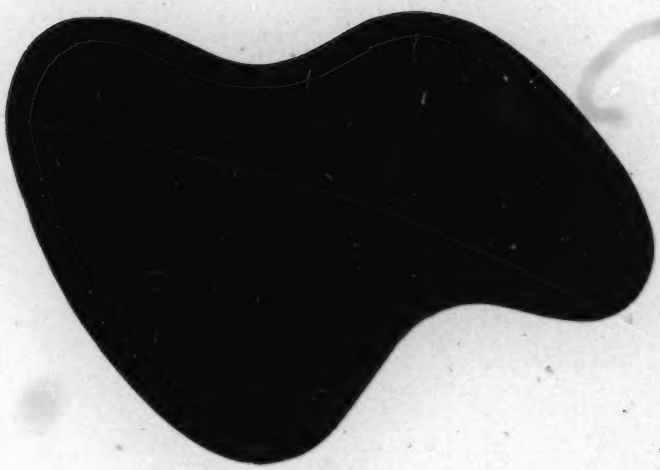

Cover: 35 Plant - Face, Collage, 1962

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1965

# JEAN ARP

CHALETTE NEW YORK

Jean Arp
by Hans Richter *

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* Published in
"Dada-Profile",
Die Arche, Zürich.

In the years from 1908 to 1910 I made my first attempts to overcome the art forms which had been bred into me and were conventional. It was a time full of anguish. I was living alone in Switzerland, at the foot of the Rigi, between Weggis and Greppen. During the winter I would not see anybody for months. I would read, write poetry, paint, make tiny sculptures, and from the window of my small room I would look out into the mountains veiled with snow clouds . . .

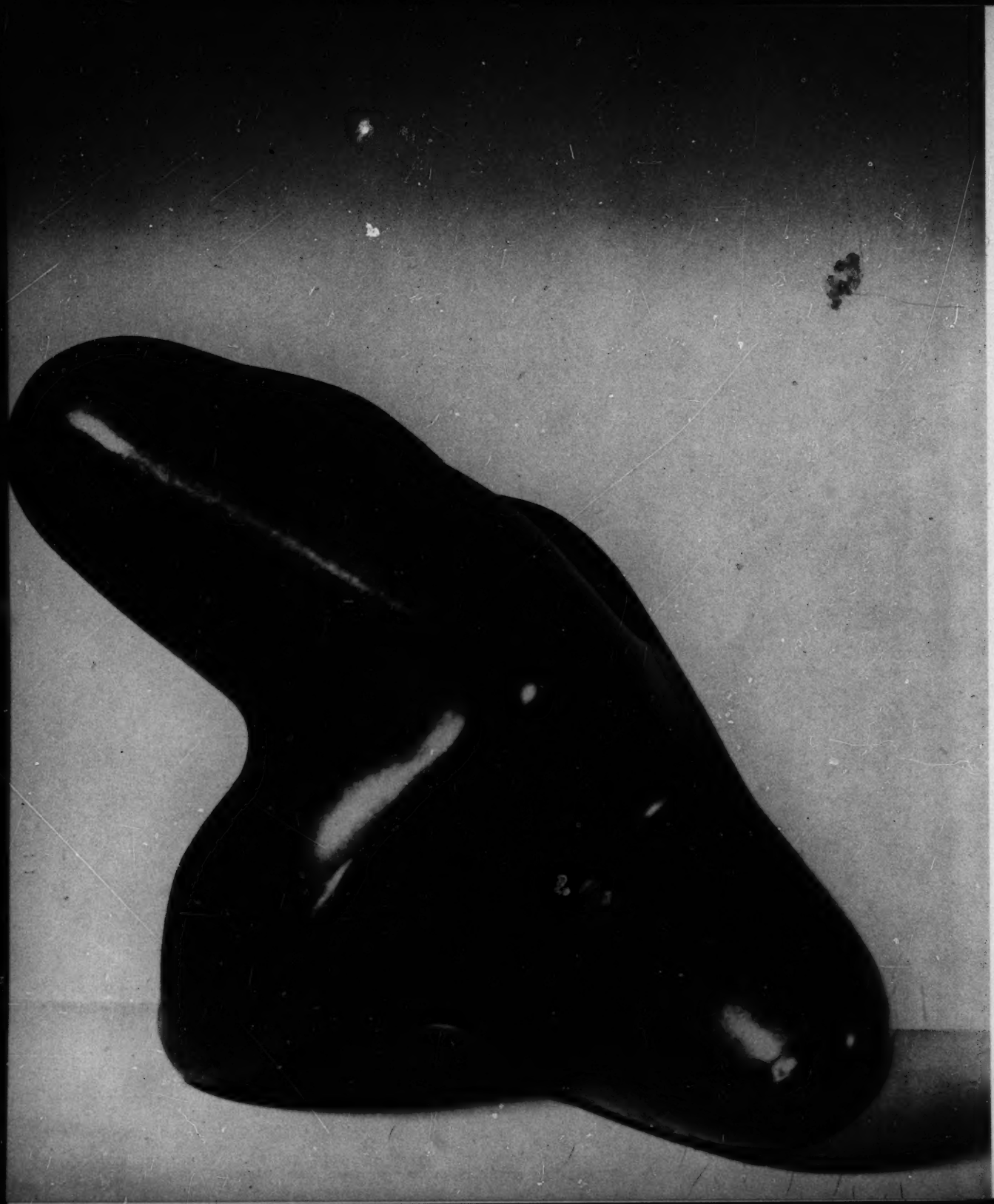
Through periodicals and a few trips to Paris, Munich and Berlin I kept myself informed about the developments in art. In those years I met Delaunay, Klee, Kandinsky, Herwarth Walden and his "Sturm". I joined a small association of Swiss artists who were organizing their first exhibition in Lucerne at the Hotel du Lac. I struggled with my work, but could not come to any real conclusion or result . . . The large canvases I painted in gray, black and white were not abstractions of landscapes, people or objects, as could be found in Cubist works. My canvases—the result of months of painstaking work—were covered with a black web, a net of strange writings, runic signs, lines, spots. My colleagues would shake their heads and assume they were sketches which had met with some accident . . .

I participated in exhibitions only with great reluctance, as my work did not seem to me mature enough. Therefore, I destroyed most of my work of that time. The few things which remained, were left due to my brother's and my friends' refusal to surrender them to destruction. Once I even stole a collage from the hotel room of my friend Tsara in order to destroy it. My brother reminds me often of how one winter day I used my work to kindle such a tremendous fire in the tiled stove of my hotel room that the stove got rips and cracks.

Madness and murder competed with each other when Dada emerged from its source. The people, not directly involved in the monstrous ragings, behaved as if they had not grasped at all what was happening around them. Like sheep they stared with glassy eyes into the world. Dada wanted to shake these people out of their miserable apathy. Dada despised resignation. Whoever describes only Dada's farcical phantasy rather than its essence and does not search into its reality which goes beyond its own time, presents only a trifling fragment of Dada. Dada was not an impudent farce . . .

When Sophie Taeuber and myself visited Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball in 1926 in Vietri at the Tyrrhenian Sea, we discussed Dada for days. We spoke of Dada as of a crusade which was to re-conquer the promised land of creativity. Full of faith we spoke about an art which could conjure up creativity as religion conjures up that which is unutterable . . .

Not only poets, but painters and sculptors as well, who belonged to the Dada circle of 1916–1920 were in disagreement with the art and the life on our planet. Janco, Richter, Eggeling and myself in particular belonged to these rebels. All of us were determined not to just extract still lifes, landscapes and nudes from a picture. We also declared open season on Futurism and Cubism. We demanded unconditional freedom. We wanted to gaze into the heights and the depths unburdened . . .

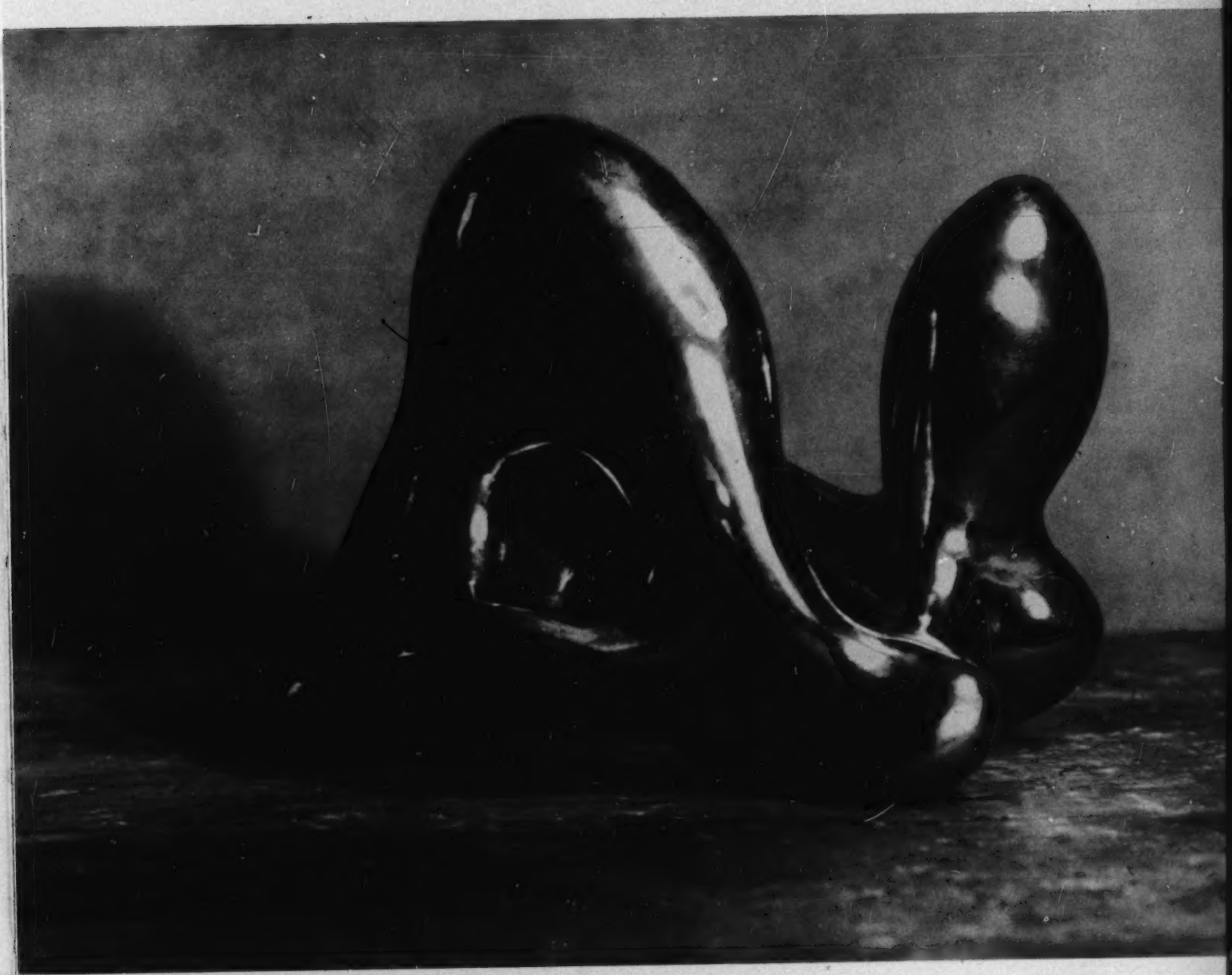


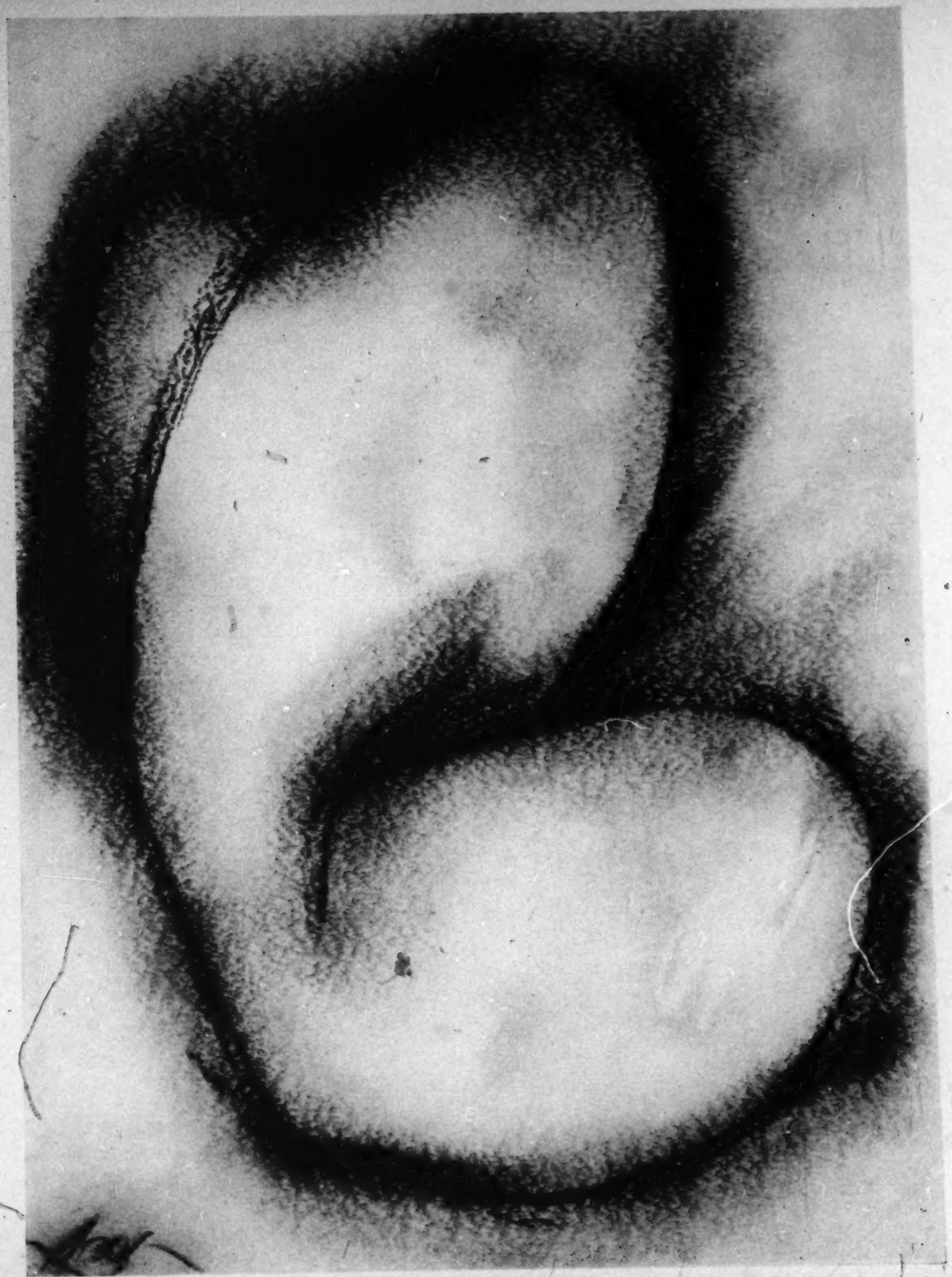
In the Anno Dada the Dadaists used to meet for lunch regularly at the Café Odeon in Zurich. Although, in those days the meal was for most of us merely a symbolic act, in a flash, our ringing laughter would reduce to dust heaps of mischief and stupidity of legendary proportions. Dada was against the fanfare, the flags and the money which were perpetrating the millions of murders on the field of honor. Dada was against the kind of progress which would make men into an insignificant cog in a meaningless machine. But Dada was for the new art, was against the art-monkeys and the art-parrots . . .

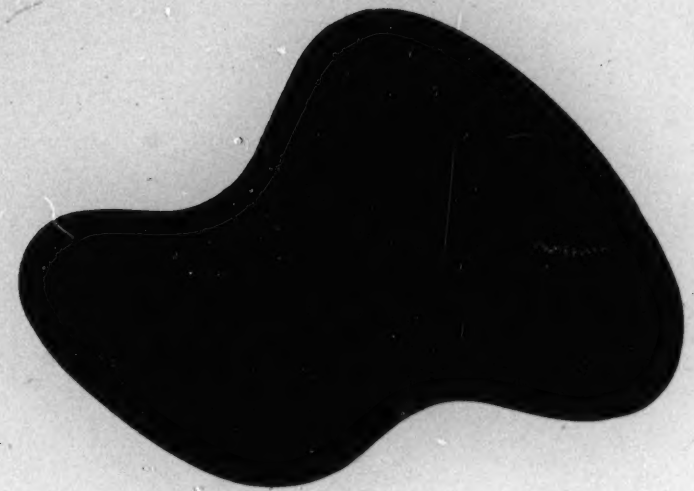
Not far from the Cabaret Voltaire, in the Spiegelgasse, where Dada was born, a few doors removed on the right hand side, lived Camarade Lenin. Some of my friends claimed that they had seen him at the Cabaret Voltaire. But the writer of these pages had not noticed anything suspicious. The shortsighted citizens of Zurich did not object to Lenin, since he did not dress conspiciously. Dada, however, aroused their ire. Our well meant warnings that the jolly times were gone for ever made their combs swell with purple fury. They

wanted the lovely little gardens of their world to continue blooming serenely. To the citizen the Dadaist was a frivolous demon, a revolutionary fiend, a barbaric Asiatic, who had designs on the citizen's church bells, his cash register and his structure of honor. The Dadaist would think up pranks designed to rob the citizen of his sleep. He would send false information to the press about hair-raising duels . . . The Dadaist made the citizen aware of confusion and the distant but violent tremors, until his bells started to clang, his cash registers began to quiver and his honor became stained . . . These were, of course, naive acts on our part, because the average citizen has less imagination than the worm, and in the place where the heart should be, he has a larger than life size corn which bothers him only when the barometer falls, that is, when the stock exchange drops.

I continued developing my collages by executing the composition without any preconceived plan, automatically. I called this "working according to the law of chance". The "law of chance" comprises all laws and is as incomprehensible as the source from which all life springs. It can only be experienced by complete surrender to the subconscious. I claim that he who follows this law, brings forth the essence of life.

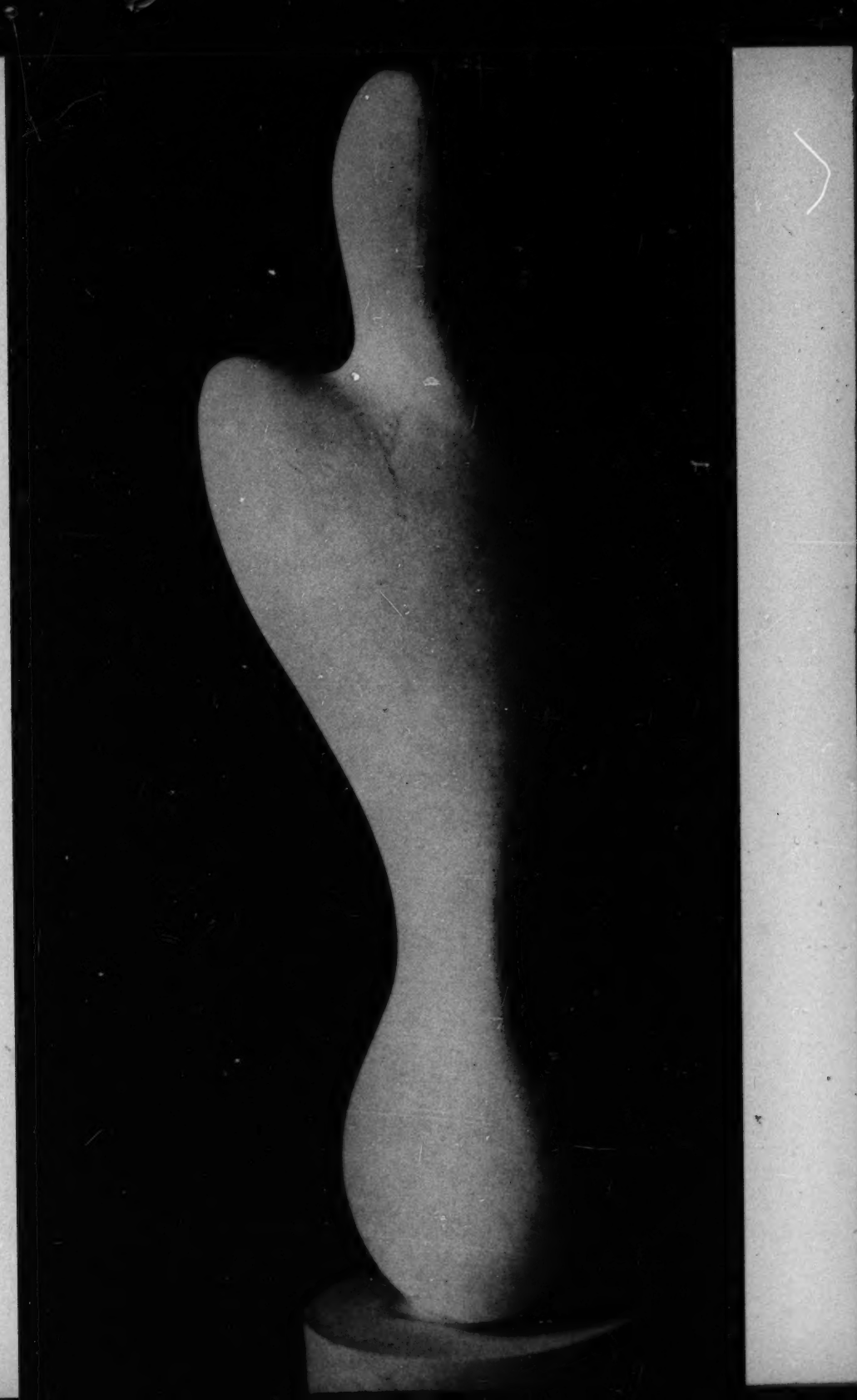


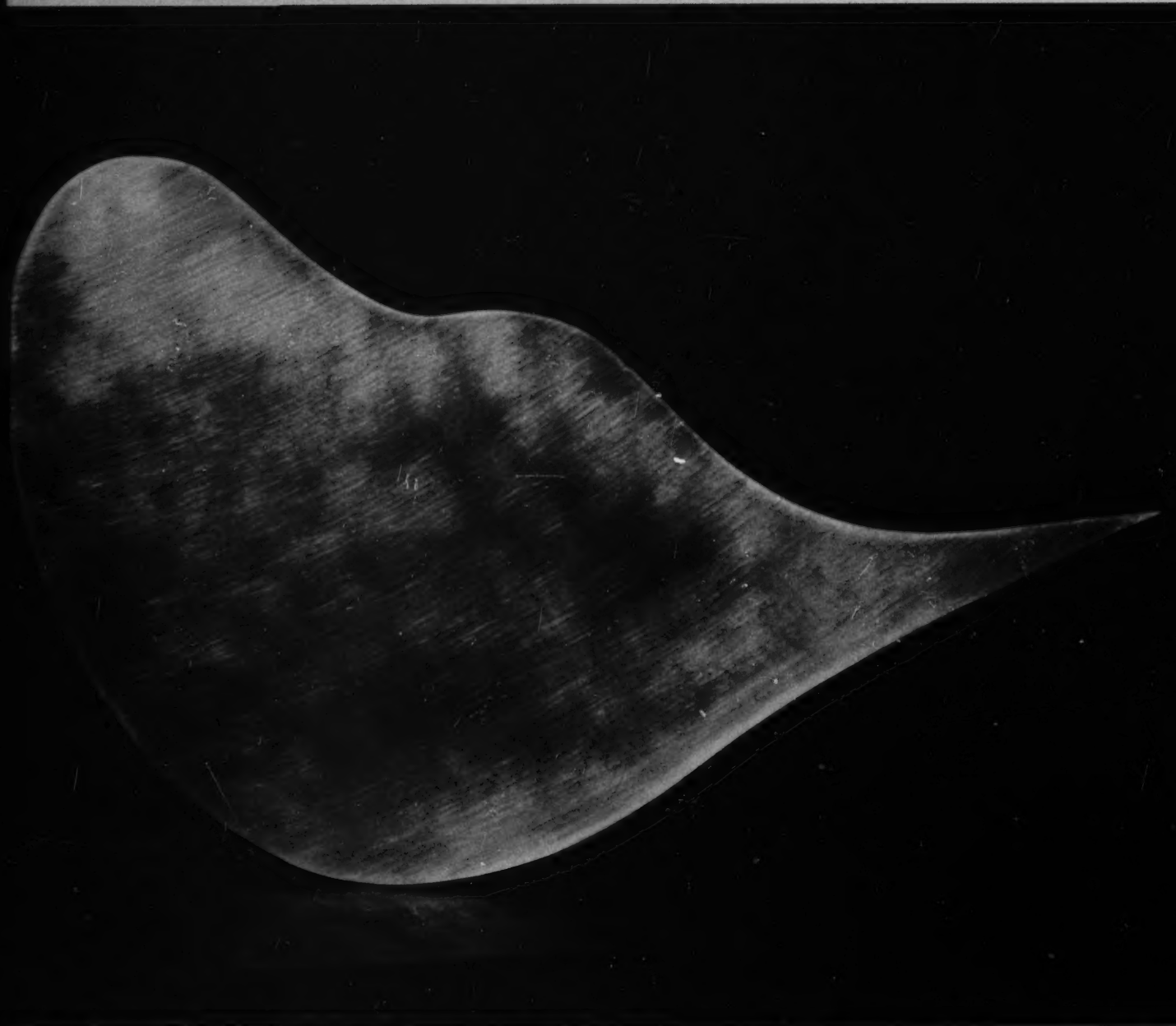




We do not want to imitate nature. We do not want to copy, we want to form. We want to form as the plant forms its fruit, and not to copy. Since there is no trace of abstraction in this kind of art, we call it concrete art.

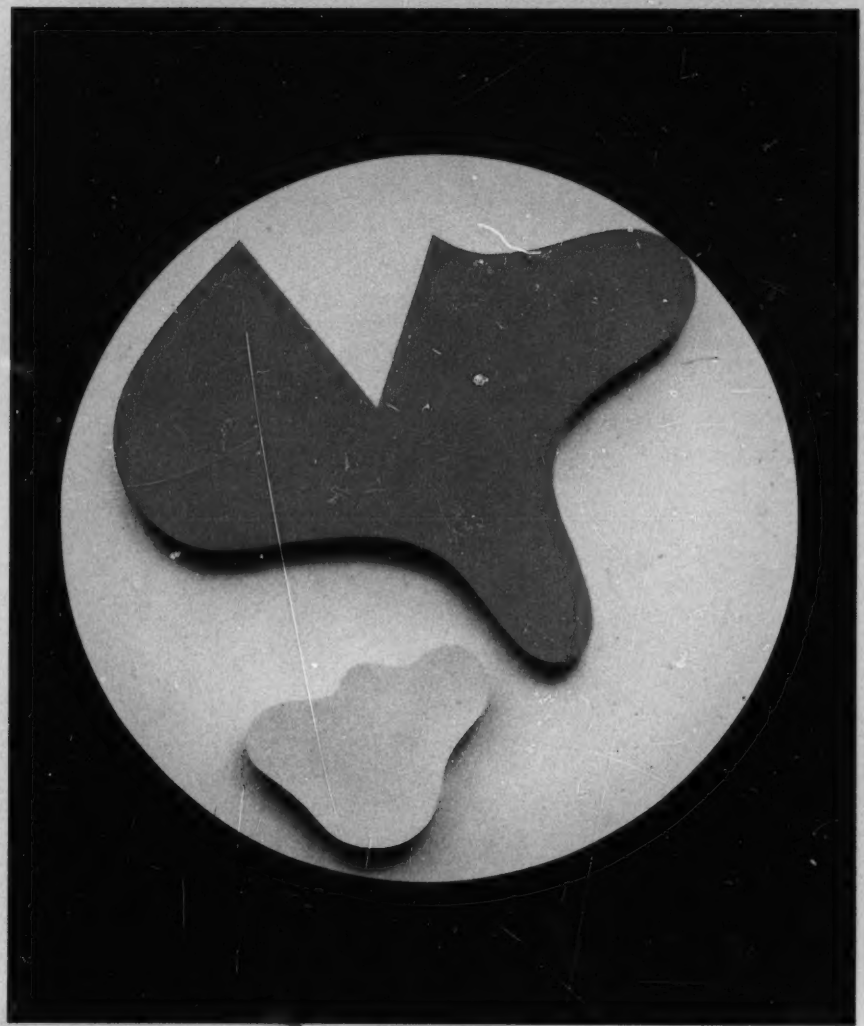
The works of concrete art should not bear the signature of their creator. These paintings, these sculptures—these things—should remain anonymous in the great workshop of nature, like the clouds, the mountains, the seas, the animals, like men. Yes, men should integrate into nature. Artists should work in groups as did the artists of the Middle Ages. This had been tried already in 1915 by O. van Rees, C. van Rees, Freundlich, Sophie Taeuber and myself.





In the year 1915 I wrote: "These works are structures of lines, planes, forms, colors. They attempt to reach beyond what is human, into the infinite, the eternal. They should deny the mania for the ego . . . Our brother's hands, instead of helping us, as our own hands do, have become the enemy's hands. Instead of the anonymous work of art, the recognized work of art prevails today, the masters's work. Wisdom is dead . . . Copying is imitation, play acting, rope walking . . ."

The Renaissance overestimated man's reason. The present time with its science, its technology makes man into a megalomaniac. The horrible confusion of our time is a consequence of this overestimation.

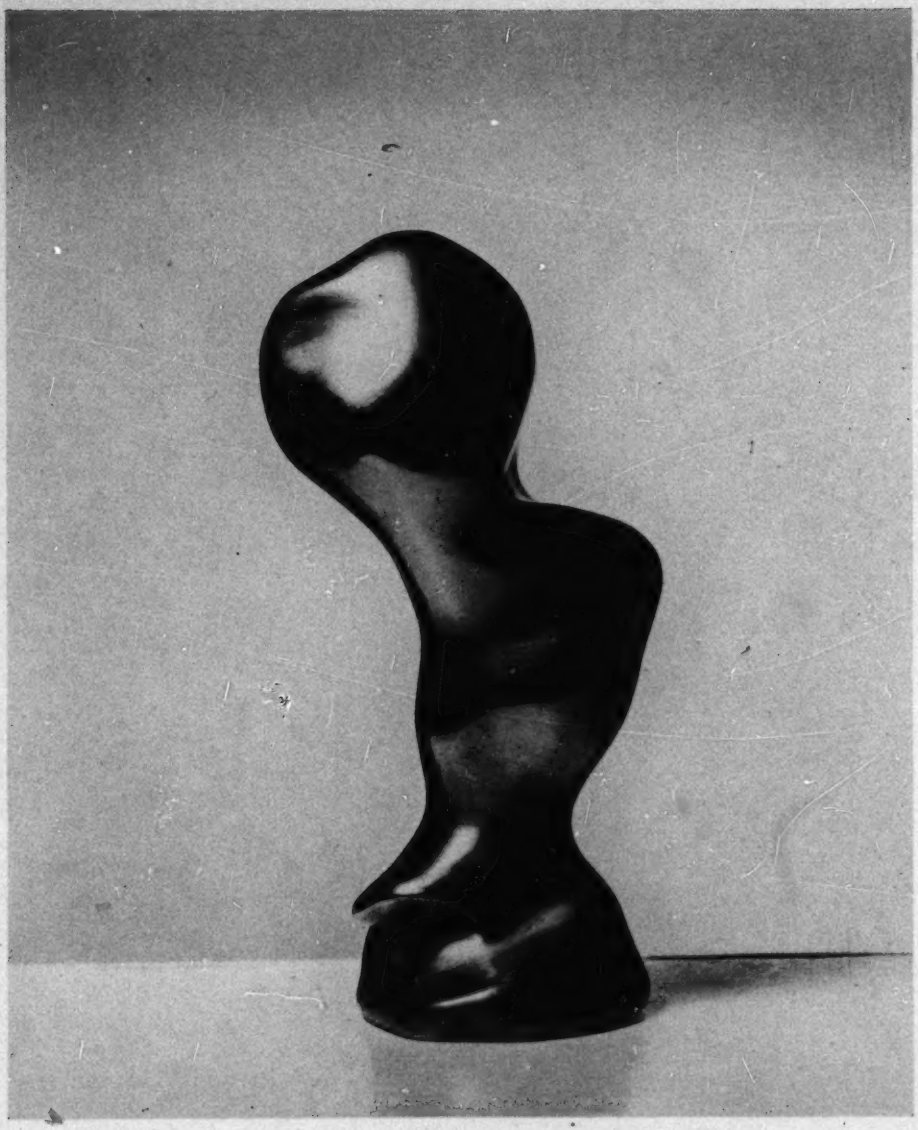


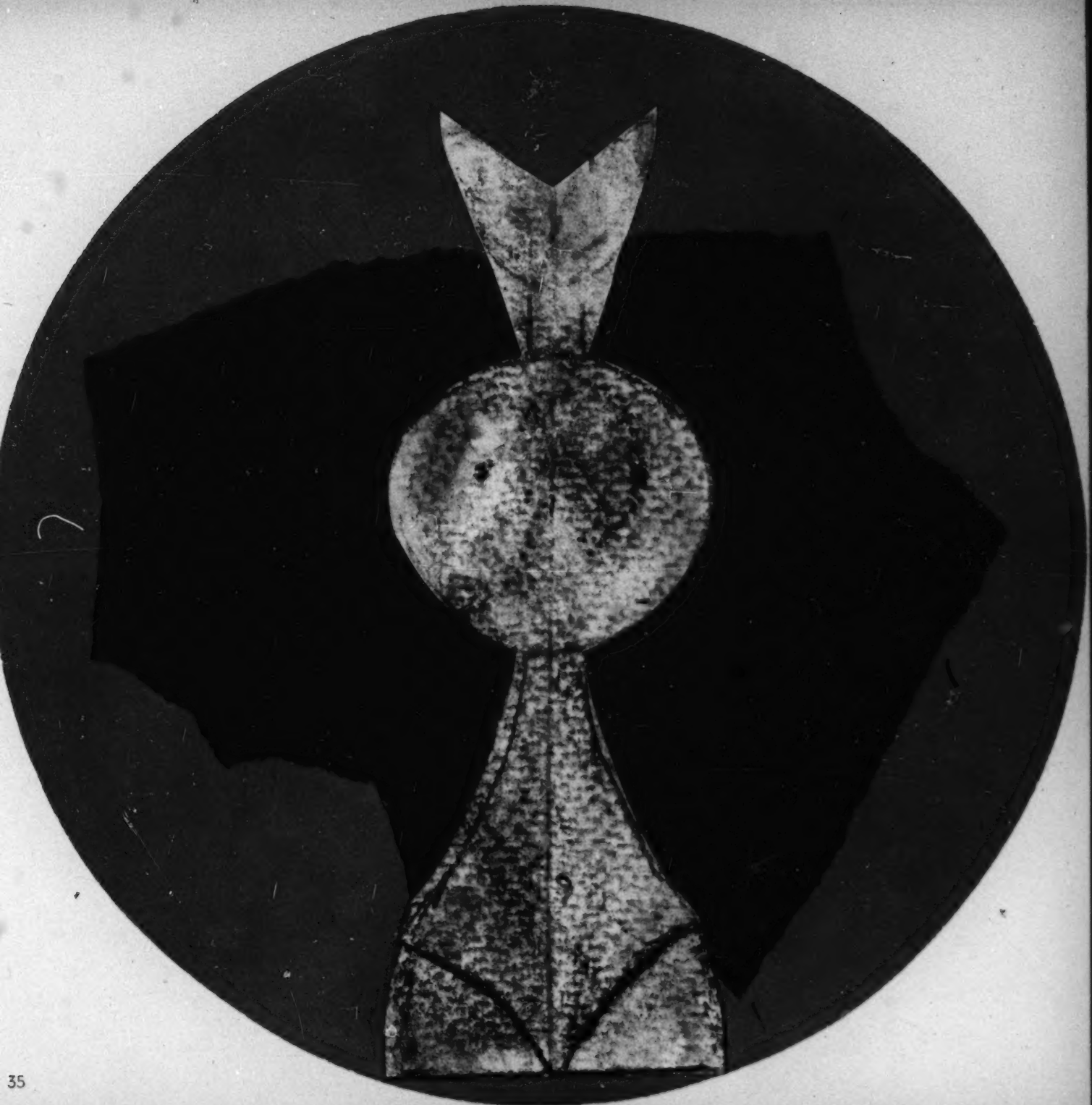
The development from traditional art to concrete art, from Cezanne through to Cubism has often been explained, and these historic explanations have made the problem only less clear. Suddenly the human mind changed in 1914 "according to the law of chance". It was facing a problem of divine will. The work which was a result of this period was exhibited only around 1920. It was a bursting forth of colors and shapes existing in the world around. These paintings, these sculptures—these things—no longer contained conventional elements. Followers of this new art sprang up in all the lands. Concrete art influenced architecture, objects, film, typography.

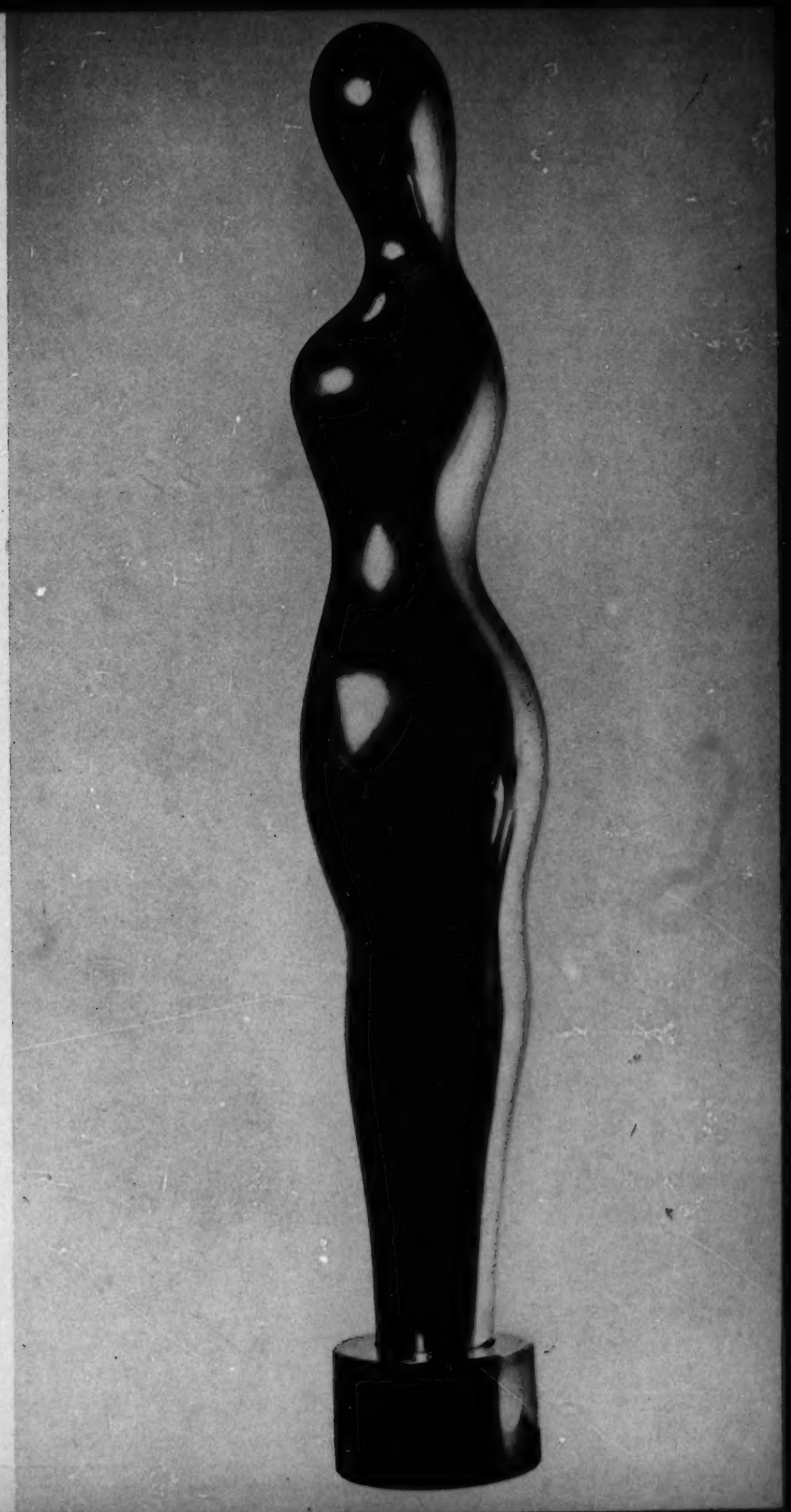
Concrete art wants to change the world and make it more bearable. It wants to save man from the most dangerous of all madness: vanity, and to simplify his life. It wants to integrate life into nature. Reason alone uproots man and forces a tragic existence upon him. But concrete art is an elementary, natural, healthy art which permits the blossoming forth of peace, love, poetry in the heart as well as in the head. Wherever concrete art enters, melancholy with its gray baggage full of black sighs departs.

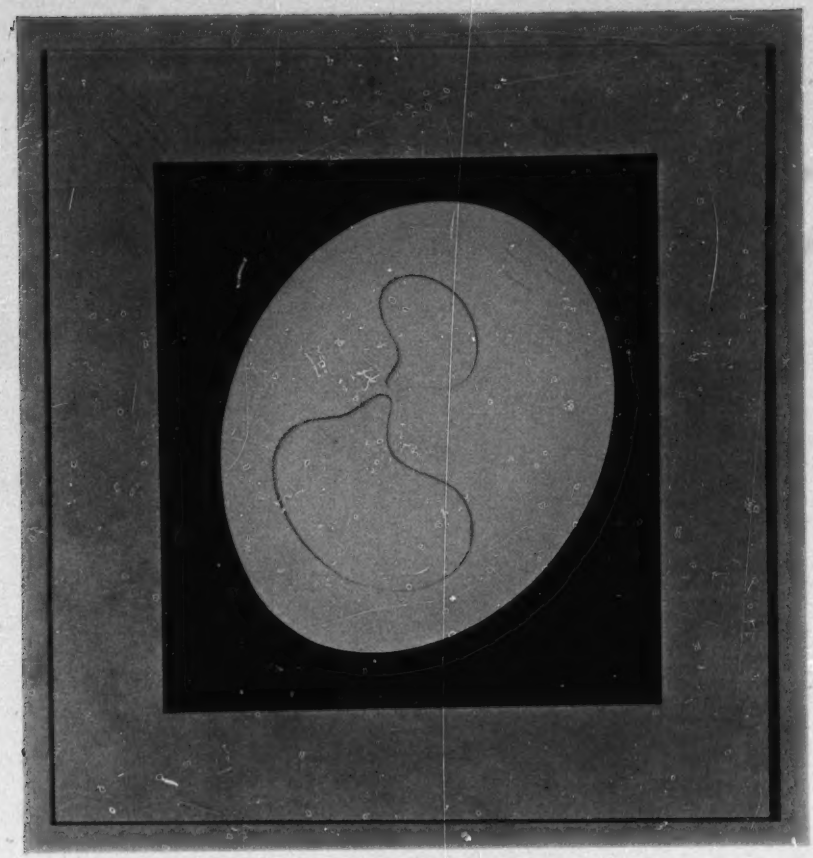
When I exhibited my first concrete reliefs, I pronounced the art of the citizen to be nothing but sanctioned nonsense. Specifically his nude men, women and children of stone and bronze standing in squares, gardens and forests, dancing tirelessly, chasing butterflies, shooting arrows, offering apples, playing the flute, I declared to be the most complete expression of an absurd world. Such mad creations must no longer be allowed to contaminate nature. The very essential must be made known today as had been in the times of the early Christians. The artist must let his work spring forth indirectly. Today craftiness can no longer matter. My reliefs and sculptures integrate themselves quite naturally into nature. But when looked at more closely, they make one realize that they were formed by human hands; therefore I have named one of them "formed by human hands".

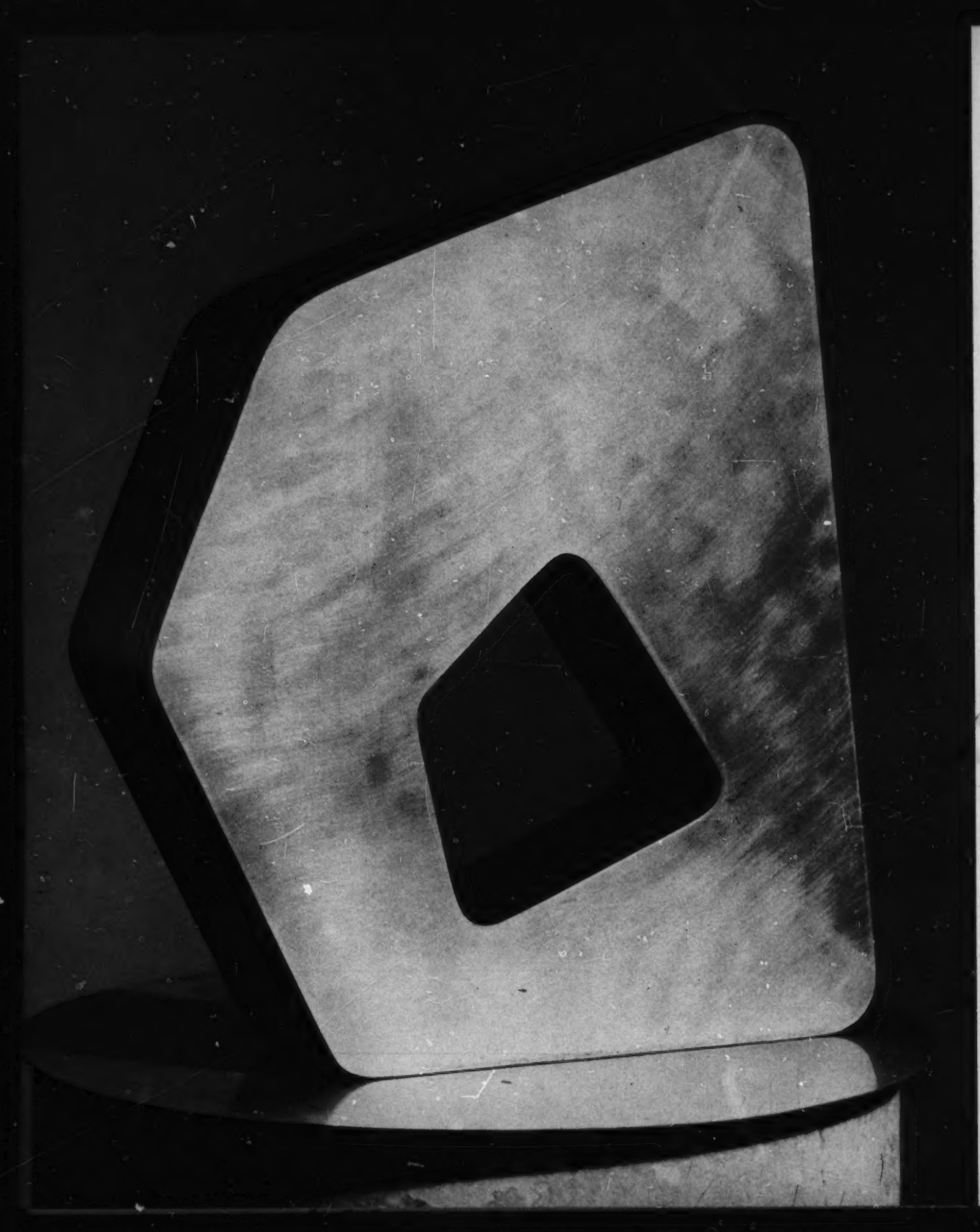
A small fragment of a sculpture, the curve or the contrast of which attracts me, often becomes a starting point for another sculpture. I emphasize either the curve or the contrast. In this way new forms are begun. Among the new forms two grow more prominently. I make these two continue to grow until the original forms have become unimportant and almost effaced. Finally, I suppress one of these unimportant forms in order to make the rest more visible.











Sometimes the work on a sculpture takes months, sometimes years. I work on it until enough of my life has flowed into this body. Each of these bodies has its own, spiritual contents; but only after the work is finished do I interpret and name it . . .

I let my work guide me and I trust it. I do not ponder. While I keep working, friendly, strange, angry, inexplicable silent, sleepy forms spring forth. They form themselves as if without my doing. I seem only to be moving my hands. We should encounter the light and the dark sent to us by "chance" with stirring wonder and gratitude. The "chance" which for instance guides our hands while tearing paper, the figures which are created in this way, reveal to us secrets, the more profound happenings of life. The accidental stopping and putting aside of a work, proves later to have happened just at the right moment. It is an essential act while the work is being created. The "blind choice" of a color often endowes the picture with a living heart.

The contents of a sculpture should reveal itself on tiptoe, without pretension, like the track of an animal in the snow. Art should lose itself in nature, should even be mistaken for nature. Only one must not try to achieve this by imitating but by the very opposite of naturalistic imitation. This is how art divests itself more and more of egotism, virtuosity and the ridiculous.

I dream of the four elements, earth, water, fire, air. I dream of good and evil. And earth, water, fire, air, good and evil mingle.

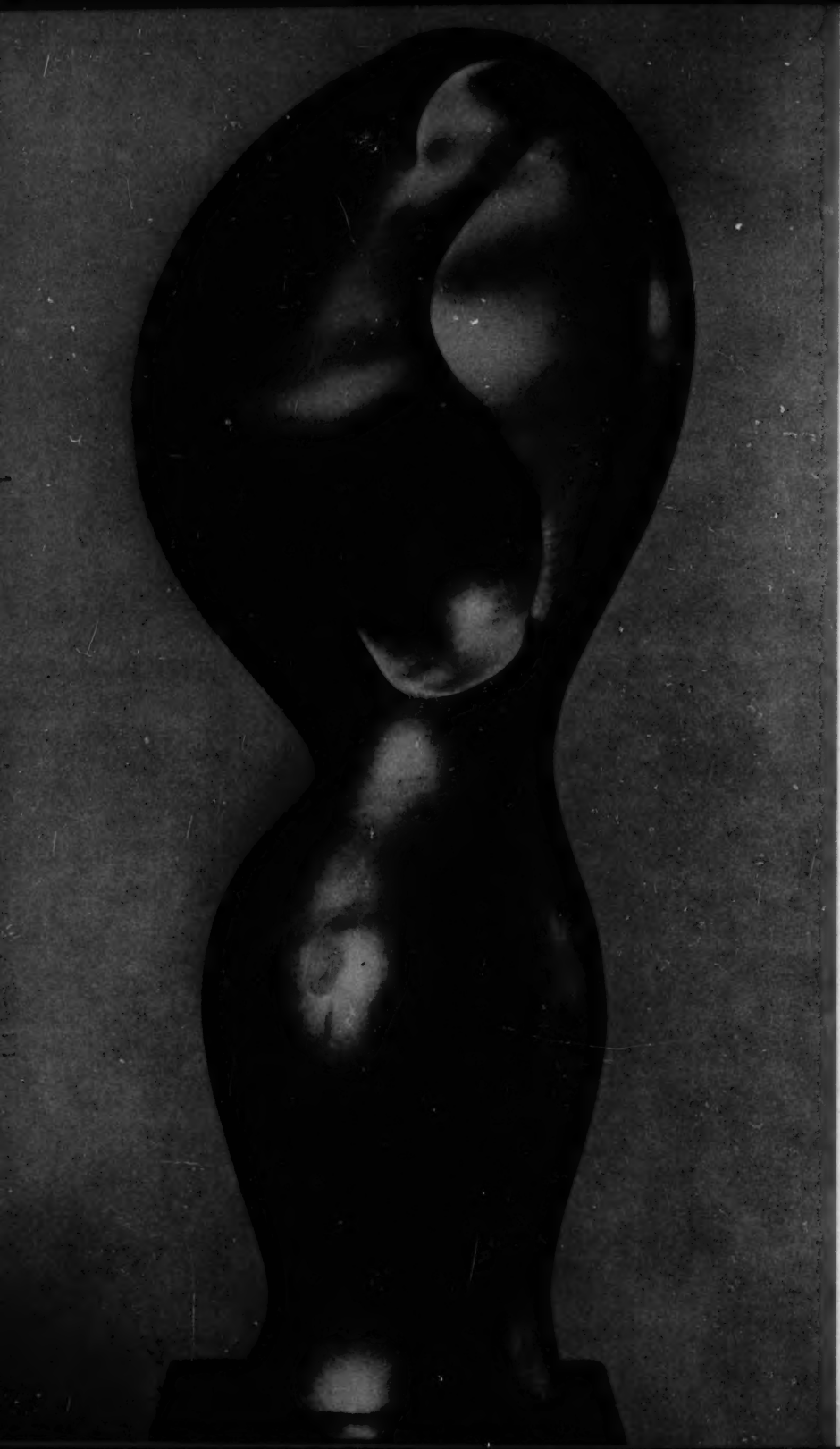
From an undulating sky-fleece a sheet arises. The sheet metamorphoses into a torso; the torso metamorphoses into an amphora. A mighty navel appears. It grows, it becomes bigger and bigger. The undulating sky-fleece dissolves in it. The navel has become a sun, a boundless source, the main spring of the world. It radiates. It has become light. It has become the essential.

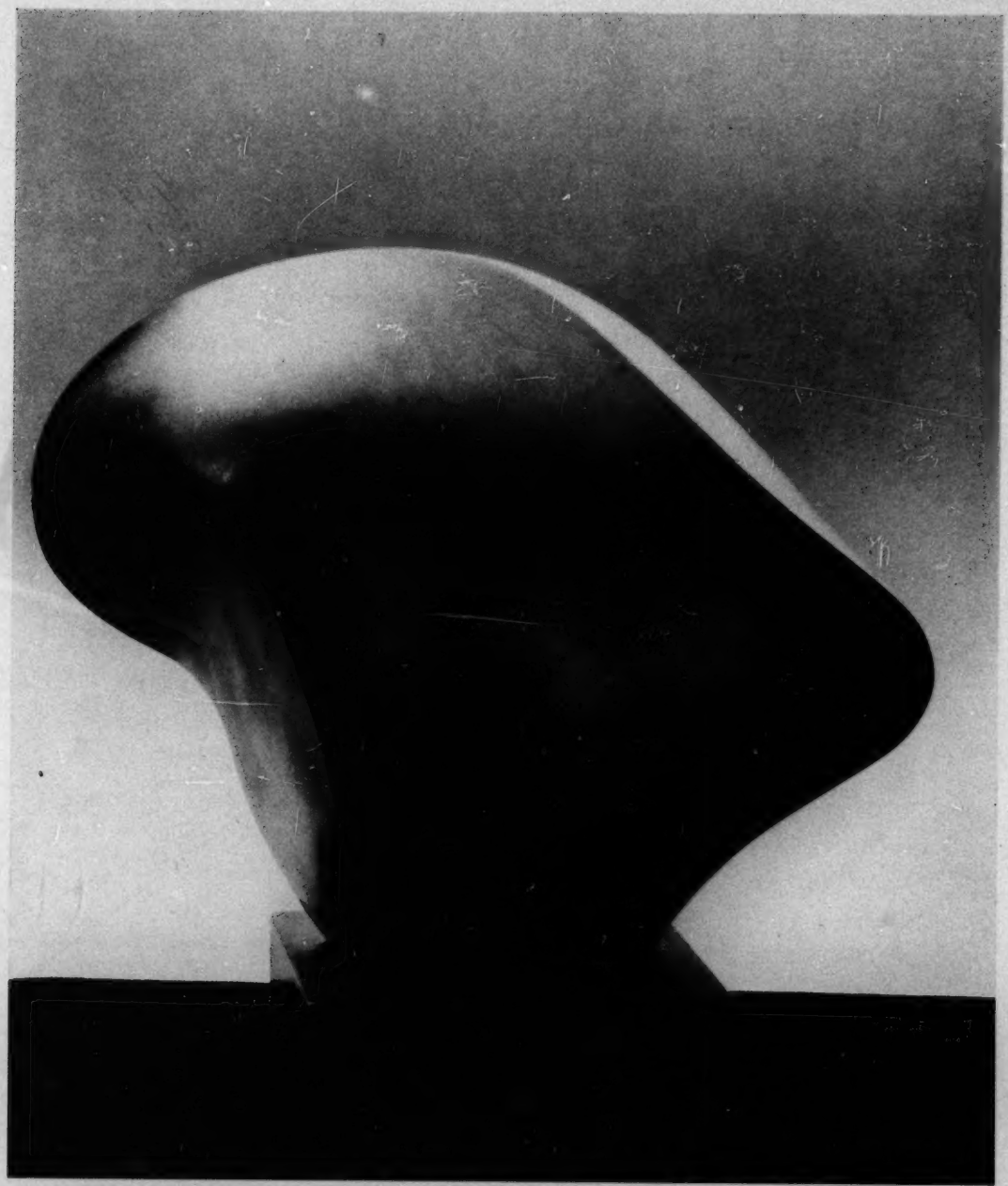
Only with difficulty can I remember the difference between a palace and a nest. A nest and a palace have the same splendor. In the flower the star is already glowing. This melting, entwining, dissolving, this removing of boundaries is the road, the road to the essential.

Like clouds, the forms of the world flow one into the other. The more intimately they unite, the closer they are to the essence of the world. When the physical vanishes, the essence radiates.

I dream of the flying scull, of the navel gate and the two birds which form the gate, of a sheet which has become a torso, of yellow spheres, yellow planes, of yellow, green, white time, of the essential clock without hands or face. I dream of the inner and the outer, the upper and the lower, the here and there, the today and tomorrow. And the inner and the outer, the upper and the lower, the here and there, the today and tomorrow mingle, entwine, dissolve. This removal of boundaries is the road which leads to the essential*.

* Translation of excerpts from the original German text by Hans Arp: "Our Daily Dream", Memories and Observations from the years 1914—1954 published by Peter Schifferli Verlag A.G. "Die Arche", Zurich, 1955.





# CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

## SCULPTURES

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Conscious of her Beauty | 1947 | Marble | 31 1/2" high |
| 2 | Thales of Milet | 1951 | Bronze | 41 3/8" high |
| 3 | Leaf on a Crystal | 1954 | Bronze | 23" high |
| 4 | Torse Gerbe | 1958 | Bronze | 55" high |
| 5 | Head - Shell | 1958 | Bronze | 9 1/2 x 12 1/2" |
| 6 | Knot of Meudon | 1958 | Bronze | 4 x 5 1/2" |
| 7 | Fruit of a Stone | 1959 | Marble | 26 x 49" |
| 8 | Sculpture Relief | 1959 | Bronze | 15 1/4 x 14 1/4" |
| 9 | Classical Sculpture | 1960 | Bronze | 50 3/8" high |
| 10 | Hat - Forest | 1960 | Bronze | 12 x 6" |
| 11 | Following a Paper Toy | 1960 | Marble | 20" long |
| 12 | Shadow of the Orient | 1961 | Bronze | 5 1/4" high |
| 13 | Winged Creature | 1961 | Marble | 69" high |
| 14 | Woman - Landscape | 1961 | Bronze | 4 1/2" long |
| 15 | Oriforme | 1962 | Duraluminium | 9 1/2 x 8 1/4" |
| 16 | Bird - Torso | 1963 | Chased Silver | 9 1/2" high |
| 17 | Longing for the forth Dimension | 1963 | Duraluminium | 8 x 11" |
| 18 | Born by a Source | 1963 | Chased Silver | 9" high |
| 19 | Heart of a Monument | 1963 | Bronze | 7 x 7 1/2" |
| 20 | Saint of Lisière | 1963 | Bronze | 9 3/4" high |

## RELIEFS

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | Forms placed according to the Law of Chance | 1930 | Natural Wood | 19¾ x 19¼" |
| 22 | Configuration | 1932 | Bronze | 9 x 10⅞" |
| 23 | Plastron and Neck - Tie | 1955 | Natural Wood | 19⅝ x 19¼" |
| 24 | Blason Végetal | 1958 | Wood, painted white | 20⅛ x 20½" |
| 25 | Meeting in the Egg | 1959 | Painted Masonite | 16⅛ x 15⅞" |
| 26 | Constellation - Decoupage N | 1960 | Bronze | 8 x 10" |
| 27 | Fruit and Blossom | 1962 | Painted Wood | 13⅝" diameter |

## DRAWINGS AND COLLAGES

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | Drawing for Sculpture | 1959 | Charcoal | 18½ x 13" |
| 29 | Drawing for Sculpture | 1959 | Charcoal | 18½ x 13" |
| 30 | Drawing for Sculpture | 1959 | Charcoal | 18½ x 13" |
| 31 | Teapot with Navel (Object of a stay-at-home life) | 1954 | Collage with Drawing | 13¾ x 11" |
| 32 | Head and Trunk | 1961 | Collage with Drawing | 10¼ x 8⅝" |
| 33 | Monsieur and Madame | 1962 | Collage with Drawing | 10¼ x 8⅝" |
| 34 | A Big - one rises | 1962 | Collage with Drawing | 10¼ x 8⅝" |
| 35 | Plant - Face | 1962 | Collage with Drawing | 10" diameter |

Photographs by Otto Nelson, New York
and Etienne Bertrand Weil, Paris

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